

C4WS HOMELESS PROJECT

# A Place To Call Home

## Damalie's Story



Home From Home

How did you feel before you moved into your host's home?

I had about three days to leave my previous home. I had a lot of adjustment to do such as figuring out storage, commute to work etc. This coupled with coming into contact with a new environment was anxiety provoking. I remember having lots of feelings around uncertainty. These feelings were alleviated thankfully. Having a meeting with my host before and moving in was very helpful. Setting boundaries and having clear guidelines of what's expected. There was an understanding of each other's roles; C4WS, myself and my host.

What the first night with your host was like?

My first night was relaxing, my host offered to make dinner for the both of us, luckily for me we shared the same religion so spent the evening sharing stories around our Christian faith. I had a peaceful and restful first night.

What were your favourite moments of being hosted and whether there were any challenges?

I had two hosting placements. With my first host, we spent quality time during dinners in her outside garden. I also cooked her an African dish which she enjoyed. One of my most precious moments was on Sundays where she would encourage me to leave my room and offer me a Sunday cooked dinner which I have always thought was very kind, compassionate and generous of her. And of course we spoke at great length about mental

health because that's the field I not only work in but am passionate about. My host has offered me words of wisdom, advice and helpful feedback around progressing my career which has all been well received and put to wonderful use.

My second host always went out of her way endeavouring to create space for me whether it was to use the lounge area in order to facilitate online meetings or kitchen space. One event that stands out for me, I found out that she supports a food bank somewhere in central London, so I persuaded her to let me volunteer for a day (which was on my actual birthday) and she let me. It was such a humbling experience. Furthermore, she baked me a white chocolate cake for my birthday (my friends and work colleagues absolutely devoured it) and in fact made me a tea party with my friends. Wow, what a good spirited and thoughtful lady she is! Of course I still talked a lot with her about mental health, work experiences and so much more.

Overall, being a key worker working in the NHS during covid pandemic, my hosts alongside C4WS ensured I have less disruption to my work routine and my everyday life. This also helped ease the pressure of finding a place to stay given the conditions of the pandemic.

My hosts inspired and compelled some of the people in my life who were left shocked with wonder about C4WS host scheme. Some had never heard of homeless shelters such as C4WS and all the wonderful work that they do. Witnessing it through my experience left them humbled and inspired to support C4WS in the future (hopefully soon).

Why do you think people should sign up to be hosts?

People should sign up to be hosts because I believe that it's an act of kindness and selflessness. An act that may be simple for you but makes such a huge and impactful difference in someone's life.

What you would say to C4WS guests who are being considered for hosting?

Take courage, hold your head up, it's a season not a lifetime and besides, you may make yourself some really valuable friends and if that doesn't happen, then at least you have met someone who is helpful and possibly supportive. Always try and look at the brighter side!